

Notes from Anita Archer's Presentation

Teaching Students Academic Writing

December, 2007
Kalamazoo RESA

Notes cannot come close to replicating the experience of hearing Dr. Anita Archer. These notes are based on her presentation at Kalamazoo RESA on December 10-11, 2007.

Importance of Planning

When assigned a writing task, students typically follow this ineffective methodology:

Think → Write
Think more → Write more
Think more → Write more
Think more → Write more

While teachers recognize the importance of brainstorming, planning, and organizing ideas *before* writing, many students believe the focus of their energy should be on writing and that pre-writing tasks are not important. Dr. Archer recommends **directly teaching students how to brainstorm and plan**.

She suggests: The teacher presents an interesting topic and asks students to write down as many ideas as they can, creating a list. While they spend a few minutes thinking and writing (for each idea, they J.O.T. just one-to-three words; no full sentences) the teacher moves through the room with a piece of transparency paper—copying down great suggestions and the student who listed it (life cycle – Jon; food chain – Sara; habitat – Tamika). Next, she asks students to share with a partner the words they generated, allowing students to *revise* their work during this early planning stage. Again, the teacher monitors and copies ideas and names. Finally, the teacher directs attention back to the board or overhead and shares some of the great ideas, modeling how to group ideas, eliminating those that don't really fit, and rewording others. In other words, the teacher models the process of thinking about, generating, editing, and revising during the brainstorming process.

This structured brainstorming and Think-Pair-Share method allows the teacher to model the brainstorming process while keeping all students actively engaged. In addition, Dr. Archer demonstrates the use of writing frames; a strategy called list, cross out, connect and number; and think sheets for scaffolding student learning. (more later)

Importance of Knowing WHAT to Teach

Teachers must know what curricular content is most critical to teach. **Teach a limited number of genre at each grade level** (typically three to six per year based on grade with one or two genre being the focus for that grade level). Each school must have a pared-down list of the genre being taught to mastery at each grade level, the genre to which students will be simply exposed, and the genre previously taught but reinforced at each grade level. Dr. Archer suggests that the Michigan Genre Project offers districts a chance to use those lists to prioritize the types of writing being taught in Grades K-8, but it must be done as a whole-school project. Following a review of our Michigan GLCEs, she suggests research was not consistently applied in the creation of our state curriculum. In

particular, she believes we expect competence with narrative and persuasive writing too early and we do not focus nearly enough on non-fiction (expository, informational) writing. Dr. Archer recommends that 85% of student writing be informational because it mirrors the amount of non-fiction reading and writing the real world requires.

Students need **MANY** opportunities to learn the critical components of the most important genre and **MANY, MANY opportunities to write** in each. As the teacher, you **must scaffold the instruction** so that students who are lacking a skill move to the next step. For example, when teaching third graders to write a descriptive paragraph, the teacher may use the following format, with each lesson lasting approximately 15 minutes:

On Day 1, the teacher models, on the overhead and with active student participation, the writing of a descriptive paragraph. A direct connection to the scoring rubric is made (side-by-side comparison), and the teacher models the thinking process that goes into planning and writing a good descriptive paragraph.

On Days 2-5, the teacher creates a descriptive paragraph **with** students, each day transferring more of the responsibility to the students. Throughout the process, the teacher actively monitors student writing and is able to support struggling students.

On Days 6-10, students work on creating their own descriptive paragraphs. (See later notes on grading.)

Direct instruction always follows the “I do, we do, you do” format. For struggling students, the number of lessons devoted to “we do” is larger.

Importance of Motivation

Writing is a highly-cognitive task requiring sustained energy. Without sufficient motivation to persevere, students will not devote the energy needed to improve their writing. Therefore, teachers must consider ways to motivate students. Research indicates there are **three components that determine student motivation**:

- **Perceived Probability of Success** – The student asks him or herself, “How likely is it that I can be successful at this?”
- **Interest** – How interested are students in the topic they will be writing about? We know that pithy, compelling, and complex issues garner student *and* teacher interest.
- **Choice** – It is most advantageous to offer a narrow choice rather than no choice or wide-open choices.

Research has also shown the impact of both negative and positive “self-talk” on student performance. This indicates the need for us to model and teach positive self talk.

Importance of Teaching WHAT Before HOW

When teaching, it is essential to start by showing the final product, in other words, **teach WHAT before HOW**. “This is a persuasive paragraph. Let’s read it together and see how it meets the criteria on the rubric.” Think about trying to follow very clear, well-written directions for how to build something without knowing WHAT you are building. Although the directions are good, you have a much better chance of success if you know it’s a house or a bench you’ll be building and an even better opportunity if pictures of the most important features are included. Using a rubric that is genre specific helps students understand the critical attributes of a particular type of writing.

The 6-Traits rubric creates a picture of what really good writing looks like, but it is too overwhelming for most students to work on all at once. Archer recommends teaching just one portion of the 6-Traits rubric at a time, beginning with ideas, organization, and conventions, and then addressing other areas as they apply to the specific genre you are teaching. She has developed a packet of simple, easy-to-use, genre-specific rubrics that teachers are free to use.

Begin by comparing the genre-specific rubric to a well-executed example ***that is written at the level your students CAN realistically achieve***; then compare the rubric to a non-example. She suggests making your own non-examples by using well-written examples and reverse-editing them to be *lacking in just one area* of the rubric. So, if your students tend to be writers with poor organization, you might re-arrange the sentences—but would not create punctuation errors in the non-example. If your students tend to forget the words that tie ideas together within a paragraph or essay, you would simply take out the transition words to create a non-example. If your students rely on over-used words, you would replace many of the interesting, precise words.

Importance of Zip and Zest in Instruction

In addition to teaching concepts of direct instruction, Dr. Archer addresses effective delivery of instruction. She has found two basic premises, active participation and instructional routines, to be most critical.

Active Participation

Active participation means structuring lessons so that maximum numbers of students are engaged in the maximum amount of instruction. Gaining and maintaining attention, however, requires careful planning and execution of a lesson. Dr. Archer models how to pull students’ **attention to a task** by using a few simple *hand gestures* (hands up, hands out toward class, etc.), *visual supports* (overhead, colored markers, board, student ideas/names included) and *verbal cues* (“fall silent,” “attention please,” “class” etc.) She **elicits frequent responses** from students – choral reading or choral response, partner discussions, Think-Pair-Share, Thumbs Up-Thumbs Down, and rarely presents a question to the entire class with the intention of calling on a volunteer to answer. Calling on individual volunteers is reserved for times when she wants to elicit opinions. When she poses a

question to the group and the answer is short and consistent (everyone should say the same thing) she will ask for a choral response. Dr. Archer continually and consistently uses these strategies with students in schools and adult learners in workshops. Participants report high levels of engagement and learning with her strict adherence to these highly effective instructional practices. This avoids the unintentional but all-too-common “teach the best and leave the rest.”

Pacing

Dr. Archer teaches us to honor the need for “think time” but remember that a “perky pace” is most effective. Be prepared to teach the lesson, move on as soon as you get a response, and avoid “verbosity.” She also believes teachers must maintain close proximity with students. By connecting with students on a personal level, using eye contact, smiling, using their names, monitoring student responses, and incorporating delight and humor, you increase the effectiveness of your teaching. When monitoring student responses, Dr. Archer recommends that we “walk around, look around, and talk around” the room. Enthusiasm in students cannot occur without enthusiasm in the teacher.

Partner Work

When having students work with partners, it is important to select the partners yourself. Teachers should pair low-performing students with middle-performing students. Assign numbers to each (Peer 1 and Peer 2) and have them sit beside, rather than across from, each other. For odd numbers of students, or with especially challenged learners, use a triad. Teach students how to work together using Look-Lean-Whisper. Model and teach how to give and receive compliments, encouragement, and constructive feedback. Cooperative work (partners or small groups) is not the same as friendship. Students must treat each other well, but the intent is to work together toward a common goal, not to socialize. Change the partners occasionally (every three to six weeks). To form cooperative teams, join two sets of partners.

“I don’t know” or Incorrect Responses

When a student is asked to provide a verbal response and gives an incorrect one or says “I don’t know,” Dr. Archer recommends scaffolding that student’s response, rather than going on to the next student. The hierarchy of strategies she uses includes:

- saying “I’ll come back to you, please consult your partner,” or “Consult your book.”
- asking the student to repeat the “best” answer of those already shared.
- telling the student the answer and having them repeat it. (last resort)

Routines

Instructional Routines are helpful because they help focus the students’ cognitive energy on learning the content as opposed to an activity. For example, rather than having a wide variety of different activities to help students learn their spelling words, always rely on the

same small set of activities. They only need to be taught at the beginning of the year and if taught well, include clear expectations for all students. Choose your routines based on effectiveness. **Dr. Archer states all “fluff” activities such as coloring, word finds, and cross-word puzzles have no place in education.**

Immediate feedback is overwhelmingly supported in the research. Acknowledge and praise effort and responses. Encourage and support students. Correct errors made by an individual or the group with neutral affect – remember the answer was wrong, not the student. Re-teach using the “I do, we do, you do” format. During the learning phase, your comments and corrections should focus on the specific content or skill you intend for students to learn rather than giving feedback on everything. This method is not only more time-efficient for teachers but has significant learning benefits as well. Feedback that is focused on one or two areas allows students to direct cognitive energy and think time toward better understanding of those traits. Once students have mastered all of the components of a full 6-Trait rubric, teachers can provide feedback on all traits without returning a paper covered in red correction marks. (more later on rubrics and grading)

Importance of Direct Instruction - Teaching HOW to Write

We must front-load student knowledge before assigning writing. This can be accomplished by reading to increase content knowledge; engaging in Think-Pair-Share discussions for two sides of an issue; and verbal discussions in which students take on roles from another person’s perspective.

Directly teach each stage of the writing process while modeling that writing is not linear in nature. For example, model how revision and editing can occur at every stage, from deleting an idea to correcting spelling on the brainstorming list or how a writer might choose to combine two ideas in the planning stage and then determine during the second draft that separating them is actually more effective. We don’t want students to wait until they have planned and drafted the entire piece before they think about ways to make it better. Take some, but not every writing assignment from pre-writing to publication. Students need many opportunities to practice each type of writing and should only take their best drafts to the final stage.

Mnemonics have been shown to be effective in helping students internalize the writing process. Dr. Archer suggests using POWER:

P	=	Prepare
O	=	Organize
W	=	Write
E	=	Examine
R	=	Repair

P = Prepare

We must teach students to think “tap, tap, tap” as they prepare to write.

T = topic

A = audience

P = purpose

In addition, they must identify the FORM that the writing will require (letter, essay, etc.) When beginning instruction for a particular genre, assign writing which does not require research. Once they know how to write in a particular genre, then you can add research or the collection of evidence. Reading is a great way to build foundational knowledge, or frontloading student knowledge.

O = Organize

Poorly-organized writing is an indicator of lack of planning as well as poor sentence, paragraph, and essay sense. There are several supports for teaching organization: writing frames, organizational strategies, and think sheets. **Writing frames** provide a fill-in-the-blank format for beginning writers, and can also be used as an accommodation for struggling writers, to support specialized writing, and/or to emphasize academic writing. Writing frames help students develop sentence and paragraph sense and can be used in all content areas. They are very effective as a scaffolding tool.

Example of a frame for a Social Studies report on a state (only first two paragraphs):

_____ is a fascinating state. It is found in the _____ part of the United States. It is bordered by the following states: _____, _____, _____, and _____.

_____ has a variety of land and water forms. In terms of landforms, this state has _____, _____ and _____. The most dominant landform is its _____. The largest lake in _____ is _____. _____ also has a number of rivers, including: _____, _____, and _____.

Archer and colleagues also studied the use of math frames. Students completed a writing frame for math three times weekly for several weeks. The next step was to have the frame available on the overhead and the students had blank paper, and finally, the frame was faded away. The best results with general education students occurred when students actually recopied each passage during those first few weeks, rather than just filling in the blanks. To simplify grading, teachers can assign credit/no credit for doing each daily assignment plus have students choose the best one from the week to recopy. Teachers then assign a letter/percent grade on each student’s one best product. Overall, this use of a frame was effective in teaching students how to write for this particular purpose.

Math frame example:

In this problem, we were asked to figure out _____. Some information was already given including _____ and _____. When creating a plan to solve this problem, I decided to follow a number of steps. First, I _____. Next, I _____. Then, I _____. Finally, I _____. After following the steps, I determined the answer to this problem was _____. To check this answer I _____. Based on my verification of the answer, I am quite certain that it is accurate.

In addition to writing frames, Dr. Archer teaches students a self-regulation strategy called **List, Cross-out, Connect, and Number**. As students brainstorm, they **List** ideas and then move into revision by **Crossing out** those that don't fit. This helps students stay on topic, as they revisit T.A.P. (topic, audience, purpose) and allows them to remove weak ideas or those that are too personal to share. Next, students make **Connections** with the remaining ideas. This component of the strategy fosters complex rather than simple sentences. Teachers help students to **Number** the ideas by time, space, importance, or logical flow, resulting in the order in which they should be written. Dr. Archer recommends using Think-Pair-Share with partners at this point because telling your plan before you write it allows you another chance to revise. Following the brainstorming revisions, students then begin to write sentences and paragraphs.

It is essential to model flexibility while teaching the use of any strategy. However, research *at all grade levels* supports the use of directly teaching planning and then drafting rather than telling students to "get your ideas down and then fix it."

The final organizational tool taught is the use of **Think Sheets**. These graphic organizers are specific to a task – compare/contrast, persuade, explain, short story, summarize, personal narrative, or autobiography. Dr. Archer suggests using Think Sheets first as students *respond to reading* because these tools improve comprehension and build understanding of genre structure. Completing such a graphic organizer as part of the planning process for writing is the next step.

Archer and colleagues completed a study in Eugene, Oregon, looking at the effectiveness of Think Sheets. First, English Language Arts teachers were trained and their students used the Think Sheets five different times. Next content teachers were trained and their students used them ten times. Finally, the Think Sheets were faded to an outline, then just blank paper. Students were able to internalize the strategy and apply it in writing assignments. Prior to implementation, 10% of the Eugene students met the writing benchmark. Following the implementation, 93% of their students met the writing benchmark. Quite impressive results—indeed!

Sample Think Sheet for Persuasive Writing:

Prepare		
Topic:	Form: <input type="checkbox"/> essay <input type="checkbox"/> letter <input type="checkbox"/> other	
Audience:	Preparation: <input type="checkbox"/> think <input type="checkbox"/> collect evidence	
Purpose: Persuade <input type="checkbox"/> Pro <input type="checkbox"/> Con Brainstorm and select convincing reasons.		
Organize		
Introduction:		
Position on Topic:		
Reason A:	Reason B:	Reason C:
Supporting Details:	Supporting Details:	Supporting Details:
Conclusion: <input type="checkbox"/> Summarize <input type="checkbox"/> Convince <input type="checkbox"/> Suggest an Action		
Write		
Examine		
Repair		

W = Write

The writing stage is when thoughts and ideas are turned into complete sentences. The act of composing is made easier and results in better quality when students follow that which they created during the planning and organizing steps. Direct instruction in composition includes teaching sentence construction, paragraph and essay structure, transition words, introductory and concluding sentences and much more. According to Dr. Archer, educators oftentimes “assign and bless.” That is, teachers assign a writing project, hope students do well, grade and return them, and hope that the feedback they give will be enough to improve students writing on future assignments. She uses the same active participation, instructional routines, and “I do it, we do it, you do it” format used for teaching planning and organizing when she teaches students how to compose.

While many predict that such direct instruction hampers student creativity, studies reflect the opposite. Once students are explicitly taught how to write, they are able to reach even higher levels of creativity. Teachers also question if focusing on one or two genres becomes boring to students, however Dr. Archer states the opposite happens. As students become more proficient, their motivation to perform the writing task increases. One issue related to the teaching of writing is that poor foundational or lower-order skills, such as spelling and handwriting, will negatively impact the higher-order task of composing.

Handwriting

In Kindergarten through Grade 4, students need direct instruction in manuscript and/or cursive. An interesting research study by Steven Graham demonstrated a direct correlation between automaticity with handwriting and how well students did on the State test. Dr. Archer shared that handwriting can be taught in the early grades and takes just minutes each day to reinforce. She believes we must teach both cursive and manuscript because our society expects that students should be able to read and produce both. Regarding automaticity, studies indicate that cursive is not necessarily faster than manuscript, rather it varies by person. Manuscript is more common in the work world.

We must also directly teach transcription. Model and teach letter formation, use of margins on a page, single- and double-line spacing, paragraph setup, word choice, etc. Teach students to cross out rather than erase errors. Arrange the class so that foundational skills are practiced daily and become automatic.

Dr. Archer suggests three to five minutes of daily handwriting fluency practice for all students. This typically consists of having students copy down a common or helpful phrase using their best penmanship. Next, students graph the number of letters they correctly copied each day, showing progress over time. This is a proven strategy for improving letter formation fluency. Asking students to circle their best work on each page is also helpful as it leads to self monitoring of handwriting accuracy.

Spelling

According to research, highly effective spelling instruction can happen in just 10-15 minutes each day. Struggling students may need a smaller group size or increased instructional time. Spelling instruction that is directly tied to reading instruction is most effective because students learn to encode (spell) words with the same phonics concepts they are learning to decode (read).

Teachers should encourage students to repeatedly use the same routines to learn spelling. Dr. Archer states word finds, cross word puzzles, etc. are NOT effective teaching strategies because too much thinking goes into the activity rather than learning how to spell the words.

Spelling requires visual feedback. Students should practice by writing spelling words, not just spelling them orally. When students ask for the spelling of a word they cannot find elsewhere, always *write* the word rather than spelling it orally for them. Chances are other students would need the spelling of the same word, so writing it on the board or overhead is helpful for everyone.

Dr. Archer recommends posting a “No Excuse Wall” – a word wall of words students MUST spell correctly at all times. Regarding incorrect spellings, she recommends using the terminology “temporary spelling” rather than “invented spelling” because it gives students

and parents a better understanding that the incorrect spelling is temporary and it is expected that it will be replaced with the conventional spelling.

According to Dr. Archer, an easy, effective routine looks like this:

- Monday and Tuesday – Teacher uses overhead and directly teaches how to spell the target words found in the reading program, either by explaining the phonics concepts that apply, or, by directly teaching the spelling of an irregular word. Students are actively participating in the lesson, chorally spelling the words, giving whole-class response answers, pointing to the target word, saying the sounds each letter makes, using movement (fist up, one finger up for each sound in the word) and writing the correct spelling in a writing/spelling notebook (copy from board, cover, write again, check).
- Wednesday and Thursday – Students practice with partners for 10 minutes. Partner one reads the word, partner two writes, looks at, and then spells the word out loud. Partner one checks the spelling. Incorrectly spelled words are crossed out and re-written correctly using the copy, cover, write again, check method. Switch roles.
- Friday – spelling test

Programs which limit the number of spelling words each week tend to be more effective than those presenting 30 words. Dr. Archer also suggests that teachers **pre-teach** the spelling of certain words before students begin writing. For example, before students begin brainstorming, the teacher will choose a few challenging or frequently misspelled words that tie into the topic. As teachers are monitoring the individual student and partner brainstorming and copying down student ideas, they will discover additional words that need to be pre-taught to the entire class. Asking students to cross out and correctly write these words on the brainstorm sheet makes their subsequent first draft neater, more accurate, and most importantly, allows students to focus on *ideas*.

Journal Writing

Studies have shown that journal writing, with or without writing prompts, **can increase the QUANTITY, but not the QUALITY**, of student writing. Dr. Archer does not say students shouldn't write in journals, rather that teachers should not consider journal writing as instructional time. Having students graph the amount they write each day/week is also helpful in increasing how much they write.

E = Examine

Students who are still learning to write have a limited ability to critically examine their own writing. In addition to teacher feedback and correction, peers can be effective in the revising and editing stages. Rather than having writers or their peers examine all facets of a paper, Dr. Archer recommends assigning a specific task. For example, "You will be looking carefully at your peer's paper for descriptive language. Underline all the descriptive words and put a slash / mark where there *should* be one. Next, circle any descriptive

words that could be changed or improved.” In keeping with her instructional delivery method, she recommends modeling this process on the overhead.

Dr. Archer believes rubrics are helpful from an instructional standpoint if they focus on an achievable number of concepts (less for beginning writers, more for advanced) and if we directly teach students how to read and interpret the rubrics. She recommends rubrics that are specific to the task and believes that once the language arts teacher has taught a specific genre, the same genre-specific rubrics should be used by other content teachers.

A mnemonic for how papers should look is HOW (Heading, Organized, Written neatly) from *Skills for School Success*, Curriculum Associates. In this strategy, teachers spell out the criteria to which students will compare their own papers.

HOW Should Your Paper Look?	
H = Heading	
1.	First and last name
2.	Today's date
3.	Subject/Period
4.	Page number if needed
O = Organized	
1.	On the front side of the paper
2.	Left margin
3.	Right margin
4.	At least one blank line at the top
5.	At least one blank line at the bottom
6.	Uniform spacing
W = Written neatly	
1.	Words and numbers on the lines
2.	Words and numbers easy to read
3.	Neat erasing or crossing out

R = Repair

When students get constructive feedback from others, they must use that feedback to improve their writing. In the above “descriptive words” example, the student need not re-copy the entire paper, rather they will cross out and replace or insert additional descriptive words. Quite possibly, the teacher would then demonstrate how to examine the same paper for capitalization, followed by peer editing of each other’s papers. For many, it is easier to learn how to edit with someone else’s work than their own. When reading what we ourselves have written, what we *already know* and what we *meant to say* influence how we interpret the writing.

Grading

Teachers must assign a great deal of writing and therefore must determine effective ways to grade all that work and still have a personal life. A grading system may look like this: Students in the earlier-referenced two-week project on descriptive writing would label each product “draft” and file it in their writing folder. For Days 1-5, the teacher simply gives a point for participating in the writing assignment. During Week 2, when students are

generating their own descriptive paragraphs, the teacher might apply a limited rubric for some of the writing assignments (paragraph is on topic and includes at least ten descriptive words). Another option is to give credit for simply doing each assignment and near the end of the unit, ask students to choose their best “draft” from 6-10 available and revise, edit, and publish their “best work.” The teacher could assign grades based on a partial or full rubric, depending on the level of student mastery.

Not all attributes listed on a rubric share the same level of importance. She notes that teachers can increase the “weight” of some rubric items over others by putting a code in front of each item. For example,

X5	0	1	2	3	4	1.	Does the first sentence of each paragraph tell what is being described?
X1	0	1	2	3	4	2.	Are the paragraphs indented ?

Dr. Archer suggests that one-half of students’ grades be made up from the daily participation points or scored from applying a very limited rubric (quick to score) to daily writing and the other half be based on the teacher carefully scoring each student’s “best work” against a full rubric.

Genre Specific Rubrics

The following rubrics (and more) are available in electronic form. Dr. Archer has given permission to teachers to adapt or change these rubrics for their own use.

CONVENTIONS CHECKLIST

No, Not Evident						Yes, Very Evident	
0	1	2				3	4
Fix-up							
0	1	2	3	4	1.	Do the sentences make sense ?	
0	1	2	3	4	2.	Are capitals used correctly?	
0	1	2	3	4	3.	Are punctuation marks used correctly?	
0	1	2	3	4	4.	Are the words spelled correctly?	
0	1	2	3	4	5.	Are the paragraphs indented ?	
0	1	2	3	4	6.	Is the handwriting/typing neat and legible?	

DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

No, Not Evident						Yes, Very Evident	
0	1	2				3	4
Fix-up							
0	1	2	3	4	1.	Does the first sentence tell what is being described?	
0	1	2	3	4	2.	Do the other sentences tell more about what is being described?	
0	1	2	3	4	3.	Are descriptive words used?	
0	1	2	3	4	4.	Are the sentences written in a logical order?	
0	1	2	3	4	5.	Does the paragraph paint a clear and accurate picture of what is being described?	

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

No, Not Evident

0 1 2

Fix-up

Yes, Very Evident

3 4

INTRODUCTION

0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4

1. Does the introduction state what is being described?
2. Does the introduction capture the reader's interest?

BODY

0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4

3. Does each paragraph describe a part of what is being described?
4. Does the first sentence of each paragraph tell what part is being described?
5. Do the other sentences in each paragraph tell more about what is being described?
6. Are descriptive words used?
7. Do the paragraphs paint a clear and accurate picture of what is being described?

CONCLUSION

0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4

8. Does the author restate what is being described?
 9. Does the author summarize the description?
 10. Does the essay have a definite end?
-

FACTUAL REPORT

No, Not Evident

0 1 2

Fix-up

Yes, Very Evident

3 4

INTRODUCTION

0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4

1. Does the introduction tell what the report is about?
2. Does the introduction capture the interest of the reader?

BODY

0 1 2 3 4

3. Does the body tell important information about the report topic?

DOES EACH PARAGRAPH IN THE BODY:

0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4

4. Focus on one subtopic?
5. Present important details about the subtopic?
6. Use linking words to connect sentences when appropriate?
7. Are the paragraphs in the body easy to understand?

CONCLUSION

0 1 2 3 4
0 1 2 3 4

8. Does the conclusion retell the most important information about the report topic?
9. Does the report have a definite end?

FACTUAL PARAGRAPH

No, Not Evident	Yes, Very Evident
0 1 2	3 4
Fix-up	

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does the first sentence tell the topic of the paragraph? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Do the remaining sentences give supporting details about the topic? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Is the information presented in a logical order? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Are linking words (e.g., however, therefore, first) used to connect ideas where appropriate? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Is the paragraph easy to understand? |
-

PERSUASIVE PARAGRAPH

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2	3 4
Fix-up	

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does the first sentence state the author's opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Do all of the other sentences present reasons, facts, or examples to support the writer's opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Has the author considered arguments on the other side of the issue? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Is the author's opinion clear? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Are the arguments convincing? |
-

PERSUASIVE ESSAY

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2	3 4
Fix-up	

INTRODUCTION

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does the introduction state the author's opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Does the introduction state the author's major reasons for his/her opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Does the introduction capture the reader's interest? |

BODY

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Does each paragraph present a reason to support the author's opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Do the remaining sentences in each paragraph present facts and examples to support the reason? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Has the author considered arguments on the other side of the issue? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Are the reasons convincing? |

CONCLUSION

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Does the author restate his/her opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 9. Does the author summarize his/her reasons for the opinion? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 10. Does the essay have a definite end? |

PARAGRAPHS THAT COMPARE AND CONTRAST

	No			Yes
Not Evident				Very Evident
	0	1	2	3
				4
	Fix-up			

COMPARE (SAME) PARAGRAPH

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1. Does the first sentence tell the two things that are being compared? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2. Does the first sentence tell that the paragraph will tell how the things are the <u>same</u> ? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3. Do the remaining sentences tell how the two things are the same or similar? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4. Are the similarities clear? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5. Is the paragraph easy to understand? |

CONTRAST (DIFFERENCES) PARAGRAPH

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6. Does the first sentence tell the two things that are being contrasted? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7. Does the first sentence tell that the paragraph will tell how the things are different? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8. Do the remaining sentences tell how the two are different? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9. Are the differences clear? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 10. Is the paragraph easy to understand? |
-

ESSAY THAT COMPARES AND CONTRASTS

	No			Yes
Not Evident				Very Evident
	0	1	2	3
				4
	Fix-up			

INTRODUCTION

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1. Does the introduction tell the two things that are being compared and contrasted? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2. Does the introduction capture the reader's interest? |

BODY

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3. Does each paragraph address one characteristic that is either similar or different? |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|

DOES EACH PARAGRAPH IN THE BODY:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4. Focus on one characteristic? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5. Clearly identify if the things are similar or different in regards to that characteristic? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6. Are the paragraphs in the body easy to understand? |

CONCLUSION

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7. Does the author summarize the similarities and differences between the things? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8. Does the essay have a definite end? |

SUMMARY

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2 3	4
Fix-up	

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does the summary state the main idea of the material? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Does the summary only contain important details? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Are ideas combined in one sentence when possible? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Is the summary written in the author's own words? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Is the summary brief? |
-

PARAGRAPH THAT GIVES DIRECTIONS

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2 3	4
Fix-up	

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does the first paragraph introduce or describe what is to be done? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Does the writer tell you the materials that will be needed? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Does the writer tell how to do it step-by-step? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Are the directions written in sequential order (the order you would do the task)? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Does the writer include all of the steps or directions? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Does the writer use sequencing words such as next, then? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Could the reader follow the directions? |
-

BOOK REPORT

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2 3	4
Fix-up	

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does the book report tell the title of the book? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Does the book report tell the author of the book? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Does the book report summarize the story? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | a. the setting of the story |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | b. the main character |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | c. the main character's problem or conflict |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | d. what the character did to try to solve the problem |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | f. what happened in the end |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | g. how the character felt |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Did the writer tell his/her opinion about the book? |

SHORT STORY

	No			Yes
Not Evident				Very Evident
	0	1	2	3
				4
	Fix-up			

SETTING

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Did the author tell WHERE the story took place? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Did the author tell WHEN the story took place? |

MAIN CHARACTER

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Did the author tell you the name of the main character? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Did you learn something about the main character? |

PROBLEM

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Did the author tell you the main character's problem? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Does the main character try to solve the problem? |

PLOT

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Does the story have a BEGINNING? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Does the story have a MIDDLE? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 9. Does the story have an END? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 10. Is the plot INTERESTING? |

SHORT STORY (ADVANCED)

	No			Yes
Not Evident				Very Evident
	0	1	2	3
				4
	Fix-up			

SETTING

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Did the author include details about the setting(s), time, and place? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Did the author use descriptive words to tell about the setting? |

CHARACTERS

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Did the author include details about the actions, behavior, feelings, and appearance of the main character? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Did the author include dialogue in the story? |

CONFLICT/PROBLEM

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Does the main character (or characters) have a problem or conflict? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Does the story tell how the character(s) tried to solve the problem or resolve the conflict? |

PLOT/EVENTS

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Is there a definite <u>beginning</u> to the story? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Is there a <u>middle</u> to the story? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 9. Is there a definite <u>end</u> to the story? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 10. Are the events organized logically (time sequence)? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 11. Do the events lead to a resolution to the conflict (problem)? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 12. Is the plot interesting? |

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INCIDENT

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2 3 4	4
Fix-up	

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Did the author share an incident (story) from his/her personal experience? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Did the author elaborate, including a great deal of information about the incident? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Did the author convey his/her feelings about the event? |

ORGANIZATION

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Is the paper well organized ? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Does the paper have an interesting beginning ? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Does the paper have a middle ? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Does the paper have an end ? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Did the author introduce the events in order ? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 9. Is the paper easy to understand ? |

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

No	Yes
Not Evident	Very Evident
0 1 2 3 4	4
Fix-up	

INTRODUCTION

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Did the author capture your interest at the beginning of the biography? |
|-----------|--|

BODY

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Did the author include many details about the person? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. After reading the biography, would you have some idea about: |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | a. the appearance of the person? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | b. the actions, behaviors, and or the feelings of the person? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | c. the personality of the person? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | d. why the person is memorable or important? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Did the person come alive in the biography? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Did the author continually focus the biography on the person? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Did the author organize the material in a logical order (by chronology, by setting, by different situations, by different aspects of the subject's personality)? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Does the material in the biography seem complete? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Did the author tell you about the author's feelings toward the person? |

CONCLUSION

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 9. Does the ending give a sense of completion? |
|-----------|--|

FRIENDLY LETTER

Not Evident	No			3	Yes	
	0	1	2		Very Evident	4
	<u>Fix-up</u>					

HEADING

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does it include a complete date? |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|

GREETING

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Does the letter have an appropriate greeting? |
|-----------|--|

BODY

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Does the author share his/her personal experiences? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Does the author share his/her current interests? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Does the body of the letter have a "friendly" tone? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Is the body of the letter easy to understand? |

CLOSING

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Does the letter have an appropriate closing? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Did the author sign his/her name? |
-

BUSINESS LETTER

Not Evident	No			3	Yes	
	0	1	2		Very Evident	4
	<u>Fix-up</u>					

HEADING

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 1. Does it include the author's complete address? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 2. Does it include a complete date? |

INSIDE ADDRESS

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 3. Does the inside address include the name of the company? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 4. Does it include the complete address of the company? |

GREETING

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 5. Does the letter have an appropriate greeting? |
|-----------|--|

BODY

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 6. Does the letter say exactly what the author wants? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 7. Does the body include specific information? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 8. Is the body easy to understand? |

CLOSING

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 9. Does the letter have an appropriate closing? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 10. Did the author sign his/her full name? |
| 0 1 2 3 4 | 11. Did the author print or type his/her full name under the signature? |

SIX TRAIT RUBRIC

No, Not Evident			Yes, Very Evident	
0	1	2	3	4
Fix-up				

IDEAS

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1. Is the writer's message clear? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2. Did the writer have a enough information? |

ORGANIZATION

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3. Does the paper have a good beginning? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4. Does the paper have a good ending? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5. Did the writer present his/her ideas in the best order? |

VOICE

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6. Does the writing sound like the writer? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7. Did the writing tell what the writer truly thinks and feels? |

WORD CHOICE

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8. Will the reader understand the writer's words? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9. Did the writer use words that he/she loves? |

SENTENCE FLUENCY

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 10. Do the sentences begin in different ways? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 11. Are some sentences long and some short? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 12. Is the paper easy to read aloud? |

WRITING CONVENTIONS

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 13. Are the paragraphs indented? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 14. Are capitals used correctly? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 15. Are punctuation marks used correctly? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 16. Are the words spelled correctly? |

About Dr. Anita Archer

Dr. Anita Archer serves as an educational consultant to school districts on effective instruction, classroom management, procedures for inclusion, peer tutoring programs, utilization of para-educators, and study skills instruction. She has taught elementary and middle school students and is the recipient of eight Outstanding Educator awards.



Anita has been a faculty member of San Diego State University, the University of Washington, and the University of Oregon. She is nationally known for her presentations and publications on instructional procedures and design. She co-authored **Skills for School Success**, a study skills program for elementary and middle school students, **Advanced Skills for School Success**, and **REWARDS**, a program to teach students advanced decoding and fluency skills, with Dr. Mary Gleason, and has authored many other curriculum materials, chapters, books, and training materials.